(b) if so, the present record of growth in civil aviation during 2007 as compared to 2006 particularly in International traffic;

(c) whether Government proposes to get rid of old pre liberalization era/arbitrary conditions in international sector; and

(d) what concrete steps Government proposes to take to improve ASAs utilizations of India's air services agreement by encouraging both domestic/private airlines to fly abroad for better international connectivity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir. At present, India has bilateral Air Services Agreements (ASA) with 101 countries including all SAARC Member countries.

(b) Domestic traffic is growing at the rate of around 45% per annum and international traffic at the rate of around 15% per annum.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Government has taken several steps to improve the international connectivity as under:—

(i) Incorporation of multiple designation clause in the ASAs.

(ii) Conclusion of bilateral agreements with serveral countries liberalizing the traffic entitlements and route schedule.

(iii) Daily operations to metropolitan cities and unlimited access to 18 tourist gateways in India offered to all ASEAN and SAARC countries.

(iv) ASA based on Open Sky Principles has been signed with USA.

(v) Permission has been granted to private Indian scheduled carriers to operate on international routes subject to certain eligibility criteria.

(vi) Permission to the designated airlines of foreign countries to operate daily services to at least two airports in India.

(vii) Removal of mandated commercial agreements by 1.1.2010.

(viii) Open Sky Policy for cargo flights.

(ix) Deregulation of the tariff regime.

(x) Limited Open Sky Policy during peak winter season.

**Increase in prices of essential commodities**

†1568. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA:
SHRI MOTIUR RAHMAN:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that contant increase in the prices of essential commodities of daily use during the last three years has made the lives of people extremely difficult;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that all the efforts made so far by Government to control price-rise have failed;

(c) if so, whether Government is considering to take any effective steps to check the [illegible]ion; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) The inflation of essential items has moderated in the recent months. WPI based monthly composite inflation of 30 essential commodities for the last three years is indicated below:

**Monthly inflation for essential commodities (%)**

| Month | 2004-05 | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | 2007-08 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Apr | 4.55 | 4.38 | 5.91 | 3.26 |
| May | 4.91 | 3.33 | 7.64 | 1.67 |
| Jun | 4.90 | 3.10 | 8.59 | 0.85 |
| Jul | 4.83 | 4.30 | 5.44 | 2.84 |
| Aug | 4.81 | 4.23 | 5.30 | 2.73 |
| Sep | 5.87 | 3.26 | 7.24 | 1.19P |
| Oct | 5.30 | 4.04 | 7.66 | 0.50P |
| Nov | 4.98 | 5.23 | 6.63 | |
| Dec | 5.25 | 4.62 | 6.42 | |
| Jan | 6.09 | 3.86 | 5.14 | |
| Feb | 3.88 | 5.14 | 4.24 | |
| Mar | 3.74 | 5.71 | 3.38 | |

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(c) and (d) Containment of inflation remains high on the agenda of the Government. Anti-inflationary policies of the government include strict fiscal and monetary discipline, rationalization of duties of essential items on that there is no undue burden on the poor, effective supply-demand management of essential commodities through liberal tariff and trade policies, and strengthening the public distribution system.

**Promotion in the Central Excise Department**

1569. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) how many promotions were made in the Central Excise Department from Inspector to superintendent from Group -B to Group-A and within Group-A cadres during the last three financial years;

(b) the charge-wise details of General, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Class category in the above; and

(c) the details of backlog in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

**Increase in Home Loan interest rate**

1570. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of increase in interest rates of Housing Loan from the year 2002 till date;

(b) whether the number of persons taking Home Loan has been decreasing due to increasing rate of interest on Home Loan;

(c) if so, the details thereof;